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ABSTRACT

Aimed at elementary school teachers interested in promoting their students' enjoyment of and skill in writing, this guide offers a number of ideas for writing activities. The guide focuses on the creative use of language and suggests ways in which students can be stimulated to write poems and stories, create metaphors, write descriptions of people and places, make up news headlines or cartoon captions, and write letters to friends. Suggestions are made for ways in which the student can draw upon sensory experiences, such as foods they've tasted or things they've seen, for subjects to write about, or ways in which they can look at or imagine familiar objects in new ways and describe them. It also encourages teachers to allow students to write on topics of their own choosing, to write at their own pace, and to share what they have written with the rest of the class. (References are included.)
(JC)

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MOONBEAMS, ROCKETS and STARS



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≡MOONBEAMS,

≡ROCKETS

AND

≡STARS

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≡ INTRODUCTION

≡ INTRODUCTION

"Each child needs to come to appreciate the beauty of language itself, the effective use of words and creative ways they may help her/him to express her/his own original thoughts."

Hopefully, this booklet of creative writing ideas will help you, the teacher, motivate and encourage your students to think, experiment and write creatively so that appreciation, enjoyment, and utilization are attained both academically and personally.

CREATING CONDITIONS

- 1) Provide experiences with smell, touch, sight and sound in the classroom or capitalize on children's sensory experiences outside of school.
- 2) Help children put experiences into spoken words.
- 3) Provide visual images of words so children can learn to read them.
- 4) Help children reproduce these words in handwritten form.
- 5) Provide experimental atmosphere necessary to all creative endeavors.
- 6) Let the children write!
- 7) Edit work after children are satisfied.

CREATIVE PURPOSES...

- 1) Give opportunity to express intimate thoughts and feelings concerning experiences with which she/he comes in contact.
- 2) Make provisions for those who possess literary talents to get encouragement.
- 3) Arouse and maintain sensitiveness to, an interest in, and appreciation of good literature.
- 4) Are more conducive to development of language ability than are traditional procedures.

MOTIVATION

- 1) Write autobiographies.
- 2) Keep diaries.
- 3) Write poems or short stories from children's experiences.
- 4) Write jokes.
- 5) Write tall tales.
- 6) Write pen-pal letters.
- 7) Make poems for birthday and other greeting cards.
- 8) Write announcements.

TIPS FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Don't be so concerned with quality on elementary level because:

- 1) quality comes after many trials and experiments.
- 2) each stage is a developmental one.
- 3) more important is what the writing does for the child.
- 4) quality is difficult to judge and varies with each child.

GUIDELINES

- 1) Topics should be at the interest level of the student, e.g., "The Dancing Pig" is more challenging and motivating than "The Pig."
- 2) Students should be allowed to write on topics of their choosing.
- 3) Teacher should let the students write and go on by themselves.
- 4) Work individually or in groups with children who need extra encouragement.
 - Listen to reasons for non-writing and suggest other tasks at times (for example: reading - making vocabulary).
 - If there are problems getting started, ask questions to motivate (for example: "What is your favorite?").
- 5) Allow children to work at different times on assignments, i.e., you may have planned periods before reading, library or study periods so that children may run over allotted times.
- 6) Encourage children to write the first drafts in such a manner that they can be worked over.
- 7) Post or publish finished products if students desire. Have two boxes available for students to put their creative works, one labeled "To Be Shared With Class" and the other, "Not for Class."
- 8) Encourage sharing periods where a child may read her/his creative work to the sound effects provided by a classmate.

CREATING MOODS

- 1) Play music and ask the children to write about anything that comes to mind. Play the music again as the children read their poems or stories.
- 2) Use dramatics to set the mood.
- 3) Read poetry and stories.

CREATING MOODS (continued)

4) Draw the shades.

5) Use a film.

6) Supply various sounds and ask children to write about what they remind them of, later to be used as a basis for story or poem.

SENSES

Use the sensory impressions for creative writing activities.

Smell:

Place objects such as foods on a tray and have the students identify them and tell how it "feels" to them, i.e., "It felt as though I stuck my nose in a porcupine." (horseradish)

Children can also draw analogies by stating their favorite smell and adding what it reminds them of.

Hearing:

Children can close their eyes and listen to sounds around them. They may also listen to the sounds of the street by opening the window. They then can make up a story or poem about what they have heard.

Sight:

A child chooses a window to look out of from her/his desk. Noticing the scene through the window frame, the child writes about how the scene makes her/him feel or how it makes her/him think. A few months later, as the seasons change, she/he does the same thing. At the end of the year, all four observations are compiled into a booklet titled "Seasons From My Window."

-Window Panes - Another activity involves putting a sign on the bulletin board that says "What do you see out the windows? Write it here." Five to eight cards are provided for the students to record their answers.

-Others - Other cards that can be used on a bulletin board to explore the senses are:

- 1) How does it feel to be green?
- 2) How does a Christmas tree feel when it is cut down?
- 3) How tall is truth?
- 4) What color is happiness? Why?
- 5) Why is hurt like hunger?
- 6) Where is hunger found?
- 7) How old is honesty?
- 8) What is happiness?
- 9) What color is fear?
- 10) What is the taste of smell?

SENSES (continued)

Feelings:

Place a set of "I wonder" cards in a box or envelope. Children can draw a card and write about it at any time. Or, use "How do you feel?" cards.

-I wonder...

- 1) how it feels to be grown up.
- 2) what kangaroos are thinking.
- 3) what a rainbow sees.
- 4) what it feels like to be a song or a poem.

-How do/did you feel...

- 1) the day you were lost?
- 2) the day you stepped on a snake?
- 3) when you were late for school?
- 4) when you hear your favorite song?
- 5) when your shoe is full of sand?
- 6) when your pet is sick?
- 7) when your best friend moved?

≡ **ACTIVITIES**

ROCKET FLARES

CARTOON CAPTIONS

Ask each student to bring three cartoons to class. Cut off and discard the captions, and collect in a box. Redistribute three cartoons to each student to put on a piece of construction paper. Each student should then create new captions. Collect and assemble the new cartoons into a booklet for the class.

HEADLINES

Bring newspapers to the class and read some headlines to the students. Have the class write some headlines that might occur 25 years from now.

ANIMAL CAPTIONS

Collect pictures of animals (dogs, cats) and/or babies and mount them on construction paper. Have the students create captions for each one. Display on bulletin board.

PICTURE TITLES

Display a wide variety of pictures on the wall by using a projector. After each picture, the student should write down a good title. Discuss each one and record the best ones on the board. Require specifics.

ALPHABET BOOKLETS

As a class project, assign each student a letter of the alphabet. Ask each student to choose from a science or social studies unit words that begin with that particular letter. Older students can write three or four sentences using each word.

Examples:

A is for Alfalfa
B is for Beekeeping
C is for Cattle
D is for Dairy

A is for Articles of
Confederation
B is for Bill of Rights
C is for the Constitution
D is for Declaration of
Independence

HOBBY WORDS

Have each student list all the action and non-action words associated with his/her special interest or hobby. These words can be illustrated along with a description of each. Collect these into a class booklet or for a bulletin board display.

SIMILES

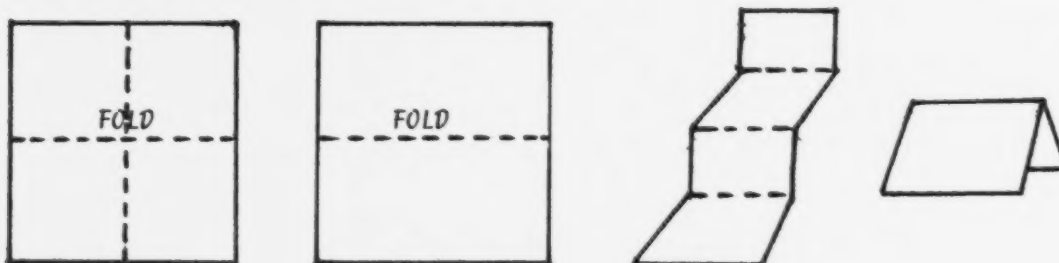
Motivate and introduce students to similes by reading poems which include various examples. Then give the students some examples with which to work:

Rain is like...
Rainbows are like...
A volcano is like...
A robot is like...
A merry-go-round is like...

as friendly as...
as unfriendly as...
as excited as...
as dark as...

CREATING CARDS

Create cards for students who have been absent from school, have birthdays, new brothers and sisters, etc. Teach them to fold paper different ways to create cards.



Encourage the class to compose a letter to accompany the above card. Have all children sign the letter and card.

PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

Choose a topic and have each student think of a sentence about the subject, e.g., fall, wind. Choose five children to go to the front and recite their sentence. Ask the children to help rearrange the sentences into another paragraph. Do this until all children have taken part. Put the paragraphs up for display.

FAVORITE SOUNDS

Use favorite sounds as the main idea of a discussion. Have the students think of their favorite sounds. Make a list of them on the chalkboard.

A sample list:

Sounds of morning - birds chirping, radio blaring, kids yelling
Sounds of downtown - cars honking, people talking
Sounds of the beach
Sounds in the kitchen
Night/day sounds
Construction sounds

The students can then write a paragraph on "My Favorite Sounds."

REWRITING ADVERTISEMENTS *

Have the students find interesting ads in magazines or newspapers that contain many descriptive words. Each student should substitute antonyms for the descriptive words either by using a thesaurus or dictionary. These can be made into posters for display.

DESCRIPTIONS

Place a bouquet of flowers or a bowl of fruit on a table. Ask the class to write a description of how either looks or feels.

Example: One child wrote of a pussywillow: "The pussywillows are as gray as a rainy sky, and feel soft and furry like my kitten."

TEXTURES

Provide a variety of objects with various textures for the students to explore (sponge, eraser, chamois, cardboard, pine cone, vegetable, etc.). Let the students touch the objects; then draw up charts with the students' simple descriptive words or phrases.

Example: Slippery, smooth satin
Sharp, pointed bristles
Velvety flower petal

DESCRIPTIVE POSTERS

Divide the class into groups. Assign each group the task of developing a poster by using words, phrases or sentences to answer a question written on the poster.

Examples: What is summer?
Summer is. . .
fun.
trips.
sand at the beach.
sleeping late.

What is a friend?

What is a forest?

What is a raindrop?
A raindrop is. . .
a drink of water for a ladybug.
an enemy on washday.
a bead of moisture.

What are the seasons?

DESCRIBING MOTION

Have the students write a description of anything in motion that they observed during the week.

Suggestions: 1) a squirrel jumping from one tree to another
2) a six year old learning to ride a bike
3) mother washing the supper dishes

Variation: Have students write the description as a riddle

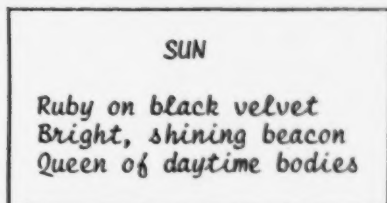
TONGUE TWISTER

Using the child's name, e.g., Jim, think of a word to describe him, starting with the same beginning letter (jolly Jim). Ask what Jim can do, using "J" words. Allow them to listen to each other's twisters.

DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES (class project, grades 4-6)

Have the students think of different ways of looking at things, e.g., moon, faces, snowflakes. Record the descriptions under each title and display on bulletin board.

Example:



WRITING SENTENCES

Let each student take turns going to the window. Have them make up a sentence about what they saw but not beginning with "I see" or "I saw."

SENTENCE DEVELOPMENT

Taking a basic sentence, have the students answer questions to develop it.

Example: Clouds drift.

- 1) Where do they drift? (in the clouds)
- 2) How do they drift? (lazily)
- 3) Give some color words. (white, fluffy)
- 4) Why do they drift? (to blot out the sun)
- 5) When do they drift? (from morning to dusk)

Develop into: White, fluffy clouds drift lazily from morning to dusk.

From morning to dusk, clouds drift lazily.

CLASS DEFINITIONS

As a group project, have the class contribute to the writing of a book of definitions.

Loneliness is...
Delight is...
Fright is...
Sadness is...

Mystery is...
Imagination is...
Discomfort is...
Hurt is...

These can be
illustrated before
compiling the
class booklet.

REPORTERS

Have the students become reporters of unusual happenings for a week and write about incidents that happen.

Examples:

"Dog runs off with student's sweater."

"A butterfly emerges from a cocoon."

ON MY WAY

Have students describe an event that happened on their way to school. This can be an open assignment for anytime during a given period. Encourage drawings with the stories.

INTERESTING PEOPLE

Ask the students to think of people they think are the most interesting, i.e., next door neighbors, grandmother, coach, etc. Have them think of interesting words to describe the person and make a list on the chalkboard. After discussion, ask class to write a paragraph using some of the words.

STORY SITUATION

Ditto the following situation, leaving space for the child's answer:

Directions: Read the story.
Think of a logical solution.
Answer the question.

Returning home from school one sunny day in March, Debbie found her parents discussing the three-week spring vacation they would soon be enjoying. Debbie's collie could not go along, because they were visiting her grandmother in Florida who was allergic to dogs. They couldn't leave the dog in the kennel because he had gotten so lonesome last time he didn't eat for three days. What would you do to solve the problem?

STORY ENDINGS

Ask the class to write a different ending to a folk tale or fairy tale.

SOMETHING NICE

Tell the class about something nice someone did for you. What have they done for someone recently? Ask them to write a description of their action and illustrate it. Share the good deeds by displaying them on a bulletin board titled "Something Nice."

FRIENDS (Grades 3-6)

Start a discussion about how to make friends, how students become acquainted with their friends, how each would feel if he/she were a new member of the class. Ask each student to write a description of how he/she would make friends with a new student who couldn't speak English. What would you say? What would you do? How would you learn to communicate with this new person? Write about your experience.

WHY...

Choose a story to read from *Just - So Stories* written by Rudyard Kipling, or perhaps "How the Camel Got His Hump." Talk about the humorous nonsense included in the story. Explain to the class that this story explains how something happened. Assign the class to write their own stories.

Examples:

Why Mice Have Long Tails
How the Kangaroo Got Its Pouch
Why the Peacock Has a Beautiful Tail
How the Caterpillar Became Furry
How the Wasp Got Its Stinger

PIONEER STORIES

Write a pioneer story about your trip to Oregon in a covered wagon. Include in the story some adventures such as:

- 1) While going through a heavy rainstorm, your wagon wheel becomes mired in mud.
- 2) Your covered caravan meets a small band of Indians.
- 3) You find a small sack of money under your wagon upon awakening.
- 4) Describe the scenery and the weather as you travel westward to Oregon.
- 5) You come to a wide, deep river. Describe how you get across.

KITES (Grades 3-6)

Have students pretend they are kites. Discuss possibilities of kite adventures. Ask for kite flying words by asking these questions:

- 1) How does a kite go? (dances, wiggles, flies, soars, etc.)
- 2) What does a kite see? (fluffy, marshmallow clouds; ribbon roads and rivers; toothpick trees; birds soaring)
- 3) How does the kite feel? (frightened, alone, lazy, tall, surprised)
- 4) Where does the kite go?
- 5) What happens to the kite?

After writing phrases on the board, assign students to write their own kite adventures in the first person form.

INVISIBILITY

Invisibility forms the basis for fairy tales and myths. Have the students write a poem or story based on the following: "If you could conceal yourself, go anywhere, be part of the situations you have previously been locked out of, wreak havoc without having to pay the consequences, or even be a secret benefactor, what story would you tell?"

SUPERSTITIONS

Have students make a double-columned list of things that bring good luck and things that bring bad luck. Once they have written down all the old clichés, they will enter a fascinating realm of traditions, family inheritances and private fantasies. These lists can be turned into games, poems, or stories.

PERSONIFICATION

Personify some large abstraction or institution (infinity, beauty, Chicago, God, Missouri) and write about it as if it were a person you know well.

A variation would be to have the students describe America using the characteristics and personalities of fellow classmates. Lies and exaggerations may be used.

ANGLES

Ask the class to take a familiar story and retell it from the point of view of someone else in the story.

Example: Tell Little Red Riding Hood from the wolf's point of view.

ANIMALS AND OBJECTS

Ask the students to imagine that they are an animal or a thing and write from that point of view.

Example: "How would it feel to be a T.V. set?" "I would have a big, blank face. Then there would be music and lights inside me."

These can be dialogues, written from the outside, or half inside - half outside. The most important thing is to have the children feel for the subject rather than merely observe it.

PLAY CASTING

Have the class dictate what or who the character of a play might be. Explain that the "things" would be able to talk and act just like people. After deciding on the character, write a class play.

MUSIC

Use music as a motivator in children's creative writing. Once the music is selected, the assignment may be anything - a dream, a memory, stream of consciousness, or monster stories worked by the contemporary music.

PROPS

Various props can be brought into the classroom to spur the imagination:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1) feathers | 4) bar of soap |
| 2) masks | 5) medieval tapestries |
| 3) mice | 6) old shoes |

Children can describe the thing, its feelings, where it came from, or make up a story about it. Bring in a whole collection of ordinary and unusual objects, set them on a table, let the children choose one or more objects to write about.

COMICS

Children are experts on this type of literature. After reading several examples, discussion could be held on creating new characters and scenes. Some characters that could be imagined are Morko-Porko (the boy who could eat his way out of any situation), Hip-Man (the man with powers to freak anybody out).

Another fascinating way to get students involved in the realm of comics is to have them make their own. It's a very effective method of loosening them up and breaking down the fear of the printed word. Group work is encouraged.

NEWS

Have students read a newstory that interests them. After discussing with the class the possible reasons for the conflict or story, explain the essentials of newspaper reporting. Then ask them to imagine that they are at the scene of the action, actually participating. Have them think about it. What does it look like, sound like, feel like? Write a story.

GREATEST VARIATION

Have a writer come into the classroom and share experiences.

VOICES

Write in the voice of an insane person (as in Gogol's famous story, "Diary of a Madman") or someone with a stutter, someone without front teeth, or someone who doesn't know the language very well. The purpose is not to make fun of, but to take on the experience of another.

TRACES

What traces would be left behind by...

- *skiing in the winter?
- *a goodbye?
- *an explosion?
- *graduation?
- *a dance?
- *a losing football season?
- *an art class?
- *the last day of school before vacation?
- *an ocean tide?
- *love?
- *a day at the beach?
- *a riot in the city?
- *a smile?
- *summer?
- *greed?
- *a big sale?

ASSOCIATIONS

What words do you associate with...

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| *chocolate? | *happy? |
| *cloud? | *sad? |
| *pickle? | *rain? |
| *volkswagon? | *mountain? |
| *cat? | *hurt? |
| *ice-cream? | *strange? |
| *roto-rooter? | *shampoo? |
| *frown? | *chew? |
| *cinnamon? | *giggle? |
| *groovy? | *teeth? |
| *underwear? | *bat? |
| *frown? | *gopher? |
| *marshmallow? | |

MOTIVATORS

Begin a poem with these phrases:

- *In the middle of the night...
- *In the crawly dark...
- *Tigers are as green as...
- *In the blackest times...
- *I'm happy when...
- *I'm sad when...
- *I would like school if...
- *The last thing I would do is...
- *I know I'm loved when...
- *I would like...but would not like...

IMAGINATION PLUS¹

*Make up a story using nonsense words. Use just enough regular words to give your sentences some sense and try to pick your nonsense words so that they carry the mood of what you're saying.

*Think up a very short story of 5 or 6 paragraphs. Now write each paragraph as a different person might tell it. (You could write as a first grader, teenager, newscaster, parent, teacher, actress, historic figure.)

*Suppose you are some famous person, real or fictitious, writing a "Dear Abby" letter about your problem. Pick the person you want and write your letter. Then write the answering letter in which advice is given.

*A knife with peanut butter on it. A red spot on the floor. A dog with a leash sitting by the red spot... Write a story that makes use of all 3 of these things.

*Helen Keller became deaf and blind in infancy because of illness. Yet she learned to speak, read and write. Imagine that you have been blind since birth but will have sight for 3 days. What things would you like to see - and why?

*Who is the most interesting, or wonderful, or influential person you know? Write about this person so that a reader will feel his or her personality as you feel it. Make the person come to life with your words.

*What would life be like if your body were completely flat? Turned sideways you would have no shadow. Of course you could only eat flat meals of pancakes and wafers. What other strange conditions would you meet? Write a story about someone (yourself maybe) who is as flat as a dime.

*Write a story (humorous or serious) in which a young person learns an important lesson about life.

*Use descriptive words to write a "mood" piece about a city street at dusk or an empty football stadium. Create your scene by use of details including sights, smells and sounds that will bring life to the picture.

REPEAT - REPEAT - REPEAT

Start the first line of the poem with the following "repeats":

If only...
What if...
Maybe if...
Why...
I wish...

¹ Taken from 101 Fantastic Funshop Favorites

PET STORY

Display pictures of pets on the bulletin board. Ask the students to choose a picture and write a story imagining that the animal is about to perform a courageous act.

BEARS

Ask students what would happen if a bear came to school. After the discussion, ask the class to write a story on the following topic: "One day a bear came to our school." They should explain what happens in the story, who was there, and how it ends.

SPACE

Read a variety of science fiction or space stories to the class. Discuss the different vocabulary words and meanings. Allow several days for this assignment to be completed. For those who need additional help, here are some suggestions:

- 1) Suppose that an astronaut finds a cave on a moon that leads to a huge cavern. Describe what he discovers and what happens to him.
- 2) Suppose that a spaceship from another planet has landed on the moon. Two American astronauts see it. What happens?
- 3) Suppose scientists develop a colony on the moon. You are among the first people chosen to live there with your family. Describe the way you live and your adventures there.
- 4) Suppose you are one of the astronauts chosen to visit the closest star in our galaxy. Describe your observations on the way there and explain what happens when you finally arrive years later.

WRITING STORIES FROM ILLUSTRATIONS

Assign the students to cut out various scenes from magazines. Have them place several pictures in a sequence to develop a story. Write about the collected illustrations.

WRITING

Vacation stories from travel section of newspaper or brochures make interesting assignments.

FOREST POEMS

Stories or poems based on a title "A Walk Through the Woods" may stimulate creativity. Add illustrations.

DREAMS

Write about the possible dreams of others, trying to imagine what their sleeping or waking fantasies might be.

- 1) The blind man dreams of a sparkler.
- 2) The egg dreams of an omelette.
- 3) The nose dreams of its glasses.
- 4) The inspector dreams of inspection day.
- 5) The soda dreams of its pop.

HOME REMEDIES

Write a description of home remedies that are used in your families: teas, powders, herbs, external applications. Invent your own cures or remedies. Compile these into a class booklet and title it.

MEMORIES

Write down your earliest memories. These could deal with sickness, animals, learning to swim. Read your stories aloud and share in classmates' experiences.

Variation: Have different scents for students to smell and have them associate smell with an event or happening in their lives.

Write about the most scary, silly, or embarrassing experience in your life.

TRADITION

Write down a story that you were told by your family as you were growing up. Share this story with your peers.

LETTERS

Write different letters to different people: love letters, letters of apology, letters thanking someone, letters to a celebrity, letters never mailed (Santa, God) and serious letters to real people with power (electric company, phone company, etc.).

DREAMS

Write about a dream, draw a dream or dramatize a dream. Avoid the ending, "But it was only a dream." Write it as a direct experience as if it were really happening.

FABLES

Write a fable using an animal as the main character. Keep in mind the common character in fables: the boaster, the hustler, the trickster. Themes often occurring are: not being contented with one's lot, the fate of the boaster, the consequences of lying, and the triumph of the clever or the stupid.

IMAGINATION

Create a new species of imaginary animals, describe their physical characteristics, their eating habits, their habitat and their unusual qualities. Illustrate your creation.

Write a story to accompany this phrase: "How the _____ got his/her _____."

MATH

Concoct your own math problems by substituting words for numbers.

Examples:

1 man + 1 woman = something interesting

Jackie Gleason - 100 pounds = Mission Impossible

LET'S IMAGINE... (Task Cards)

- *You're a tree, cloud, rock or lake telling a story of your feelings.
- *You're a kite - about to fly - flying.
- *You're a fire out-of-control.
- *You're a picture on a wall - what do you see, hear, feel?
- *You're a _____.
- *You're a historical document - what do you stand for?
- *You're a hero in history - what did you play as a child?
- *You're a favorite actress or actor - what's your life like?
- *You're a newspaper reporter in your home town - write an account of an exciting event.
- *You're a teacher - what would you be like in class?
- *You can change places with anyone in the world today - who would you be and where?
- *You're a cloud drifting in the sky - what's it like?
- *You're a possession of one of your heroes - what are you and what's it like?
- *You're a great inventor of the 21st Century - what is your invention?

I CAN CREATE (Task Cards)

- *Create a new sport.
- *Invent a new type of food.
- *Invent a new machine.
- *Design a new plant or flower.
- *Design an ideal school.
- *Create a new word for "something special."
- *Design a new car.
- *Design a new T.V. show.
- *Design a record cover.
- *Create a new language for animals.
- *Design a haunted house.
- *Create a new language for your friends.
- *Design a new sign for the Zodiac.
- *Design an ad campaign for a new product.
- *Design a new city.
- *Design a new system of transportation.
- *Invent a new color-name and color blends
- *Design a new clothing line for yourself.

I'M PACKING FOR...

- *a canoe trip on the Great Lakes.
- *a trip to a dude ranch.
- *a trip to the babysitter's.
- *an emergency next door.
- *a trip around the world.
- *a trip to Alaska or Florida.
- *a trip to a dairy farm.
- *a trip on a submarine.
- *a trip to Disneyworld.
- *a trip anyplace with a large family.
- *a fishing trip.
- *a trip to the hospital.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF...

- *you were a ghost? What would you do?
- *you were a germ?
- *you were something in a junkyard? How would you feel?
- *you were alive in a shell?
- *you had two minutes on T.V.? What would you say or do?
- *life was without clothes?
- *there weren't any books or teachers?
- *a fairy tale could come true? Which one would you pick?
- *wheels didn't exist?
- *you were a parent?
- *the world went backwards?
- *it really rained cats and dogs?

READ AND BE WISE!¹ (Task cards)

Directions: Read a story or a book.

Choose 2 Yellow Cards. Answer the questions in complete sentences.

Choose 3 Red Cards. List the answers.

Yellow Cards:

- *What was the most exciting or interesting part of your story?
- *Describe the personality of one of the characters in your story.
- *Find a word in the story that you aren't sure of. Look it up in the dictionary. Write the information for that word.
- *What is the title of your story? Write a new title for the story.
- *What was the favorite part of the story you have just read?
- *Where does your story take place? How do you know?
- *What is the purpose or main idea of your story?
- *If you had written this story, what part would you have written differently? Why?
- *Use the encyclopedia to find one additional fact that relates to your story.
- *What object, person, or animal would you most like to have in your house from this story?
- *Make up one question about the story you have just read.
- *Is your story humorous, tragic, informational, scientific, make-believe, or any other category?
- *Who is the most important person in your story? Why? Use a sentence to tell your answer.
- *If you had enough money, what object, thing or place in the story would you like to buy?
- *Which character would make a good friend? Why?
- *When did your story take place? What in the story gives you a clue?

Red Cards:

- *Find 6 words with consonant blends in your story. (bl, cr, fl, gr, etc.)
- *Find 4 words that have the short "a" sound (hat, apple, man)
- *Write 3 words that have a silent consonant in them (whistle, knife)
- *Write 4 words from your story that have double vowels (book, speed)
- *Find 5 long vowel words (one of each). (gave, beside, like, etc.)
- *Alphabetize all the words in the last sentence of your story.
- *Find 5 words that have 2 syllables. (stu-dent, pa-per)
- *Find a 3 syllable word. Use a dictionary to divide it and mark the accent.
- *Write 3 words that have a double consonant. (little, funny)
- *List 5 words that have a silent "e" in your story. (like, tire)
- *Find a word that makes a new word by spelling it backwards. (was - saw)
- *Find 2 contractions in your story. (aren't, I'll)
- *Write the longest word from your story. Divide into syllables.
- *Write any word that begins with any consonant letter between j and n.
- *Find 3 words and write their opposites. (big - little, etc.)
- *Find 3 compound words. (inside, snowman, cowboy)
- *Find a word in your story and write one that rhymes with it. (cake, lake)
- *Find a homonym for one of the words in your story. (one - won)

¹ Taken from 101 Fantastic Funshop Favorites

THIS IS THE YEAR THAT WAS¹

What better way to remember an activity-packed school year than to let children choose and illustrate those events that were of most importance to them? Ask each child to think of an activity or occasion from the last nine months - humorous or serious, special or of a more everyday nature - that had significance for her or him. Then have each student write a headline that describes the chosen event - "The Day We Made a Teepee" or "Engine Company No. 9 Visits Our Classroom" - and below it draw a picture that brings the event to life. A bulletin board display of each child's special memory can vividly show everyone what a wonderful year it was.

LITERARY DEVICES¹

If you're looking for ways to add zest to your students' writing and speech, introduce your class to hyperbole and onomatopoeia. Many times people exaggerate to make a point. Do you remember telling your friends that you stayed up all night studying for the test? Or have you heard, "When we broke up, I cried for weeks"? Write a statement about each of the following subjects in which you exaggerate to make a point. The subject areas are broad. You may wish to narrow them down in making your statements.

Example: His heart warmed the entire world.

- 1) weather
- 2) a basketball game
- 3) hunger
- 4) an injury
- 5) an empty house
- 6) the United States
- 7) an animal
- 8) a color
- 9) the size or weight of something
- 10) a crowded train

This kind of exaggeration is a literary device called hyperbole. It is used in both poetry and prose. Sometimes hyperbole is used along with a simile or metaphor to make a comparison.

Example: He is as friendly as a candidate for office.

Sight is the sense most heavily appealed to in writing. Our other senses, including hearing, are often not developed as they could be. Yet a writer can bring originality and freshness to his(her) writing by appealing to other senses besides sight. Be prepared to listen better so that you can write about the way things sound. Write a word, phrase or sentence for each of the following. Make your reader hear the sound in his(her) mind.

Example: a chair. The chair scraped and scratched its way across the floor.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) a table | 6) dogs barking |
| 2) a movie theater (before movie) | 7) rain |
| 3) a T.V. western scene | 8) a traffic jam |
| 4) school dismissal | 9) someone preparing dinner |
| 5) a fire truck | 10) a guitar playing |

¹ Taken from Language Arts magazine

LITERARY DEVICES¹ (continued)

A rather specialized way to put sound in writing is to use words that imitate or suggest certain sounds. Words which sound like their meaning onomatopoeitic...

Example: The bee buzzed...

Try writing an entire paragraph or poem describing the sounds that might be heard in a particular scene. The following list contains suggestions. Remember - sounds only.

- 1) the school cafeteria
- 2) a city street in a foreign country
- 3) an airplane ride
- 4) a train crash
- 5) a walk in the park
- 6) a moonless night in a haunted house
- 7) a rock 'n roll concert
- 8) a dripping sink
- 9) a crowded store
- 10) a fire

SUPER SALES TALK²

Creative ads for products of doubtful utility serve to stimulate ideas

Bought a broken window lately? Probably not, but then probably no one ever explained to you just how useful a broken window can be and why you really need one.

Challenge your creative thinkers to come up with some persuasive advertising copy - and/or posters, T.V. spots, catchy jingles - designed to sell products that seem utterly useless.

In preparing a pitch, the copy writers should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- 1) How could this product be useful?
- 2) Is there any particular sort of person that might need this product more than others?
- 3) What modifications or accessories are available?
- 4) Why would a person definitely be getting his(her) money's worth buying this product?

The following products might serve as an initial inventory:

- *two right shoes
- *a glass with no bottom
- *a banana skin
- *a toothless comb

¹ Taken from Language Arts magazine

² Taken from Learning magazine

SUPER SALES TALK¹ (continued)

- *a table with 2½ legs
- *a flat bicycle tire
- *a dictionary with words in random order
- *a jacket that has three sleeves
- *24 bottles of green food coloring
- *disposable windows
- *an elevator that only goes down
- *a calculator with Roman numerals
- *a dead fern
- *a sandpaper carpeting
- *a record player with no needle
- *a stainless steel marshmallow
- *a scissor blade
- *used staples

STARTERS FOR CREATIVE WRITING²

In an appropriate place keep a "Let's Write a Story or Poem" box which contains pictures, materials, first lines of stories, haiku and cinquain dittoed sheet blanks and all kinds of things that can serve as stimulants to write.

Situations: Write a story or poem about them.

- *You are walking down the street when you hear a big wind blowing. Suddenly, the next thing you know you're in a strange bed and...
- *Your mother's appearance has changed - she looks twenty years younger...
- *You go downstairs for breakfast one morning and find the house deserted. So is the street and neighborhood. You can't find anyone anywhere...
- *You have a secret wish that you haven't told anyone...
- *If you could be an animal for two days, what animal would you want to be and why?
- *What will the North Star see happening on earth tonight?
- *You are a newspaper reporter rushing back to the office with the greatest scoop of the year.
- *During the winter a hibernating bear dreams about...
- *Men from Mars came down to earth and...
- *You are a block of stone that will be carved into a statue. Many people look at you as a statue. What did you think when you were being made? What do you think when people go by? What are you like?
- *You won a contest for the most unusual toy. What is it like? What does it do?
- *You are opening a store. What are you selling? What does your store look like?
- *Four turtles are going on a voyage. They travel on land, sea and air. Tell me their adventures and what they find at the end.
- *Walking home from school, all of a sudden, a hand comes up through a crack in the sidewalk...
- *You and three friends are stranded on a mountain. There's nothing around but snow and the wind blowing. Suddenly a phone rings!

¹ Taken from Learning magazine, Idea by Burke and Alquist, Rancho Cordova, Ca.

² Taken from Creative Teaching in the Elementary School

STARTERS FOR CREATIVE WRITING¹ (continued)

- *Due to a magic spell, you were put in the bottom of a bottle of Coke. How do you get out? Who saves you?
- *Everything you touch with your pinky finger turns into a daisy! What do you do? What are some of the things that happen to you? How did this happen?
- *Pretend your fingers are a family and write about what would happen if one didn't get along with the other four. What would be the consequences?
- *You are a person in America who cannot speak English.
- *The huge crate was in the doorway when you arrived home. It looked very mysterious with all its foreign stamps. Someone had already pried the nails loose, so all you had to do was lift the top up to see what was inside. You reached out your hand...
- *You are up in the clouds on a mission over a foreign land. It is a beautiful morning. You see enemy planes coming toward you. What do you do? How do you feel? What happens?

Classroom activities to provoke creative writing:

- *Give each child a puppet and let him write whatever the puppet tells him(her).
- *Give each one a word to write about. For example: blub.
- *Have the group write a book - each one writing a chapter.
- *The teacher brings in an unfamiliar object. Have the children write about what it is, where it came from and what it could be used for.
- *Bring in old hats or clothing for them to elaborate on verbally.
- *Bring in a piece of material and ask them what it could be and how it came to be that.
- *Give them an action word and have them build a story around it.
- *Bring in a stuffed animal for them to write about.
- *Show them a picture of the universe and ask them to create a story of their experience in outer space.
- *Show them an old hat. Put it on your head and ask them to write a story of what happens.
- *Show them a nature picture to create a story about.
- *Bring in a live animal to write about.
- *Stir their imagination with a picture of an abstract object.
- *Show a particular slide or slides that will interest them.
- *Have the children draw a picture and then tell the story behind it.
- *Take advantage of a coming holiday by having the children write one sentence about it. Have one child start it out, then pass it on to the next child.
- *Hand out words cut out of magazines. Have children use these as ideas and then write about them.
- *Imagine if you could receive just one present for Christmas, what would it be and why?
- *Imagine a man comes up to you and says you must spend the \$100 he gives you in one day or you will die.
- *Have the class think of all the images and ideas suggested by one word (autumn, night, summer, beauty) and write them on the board.

¹ Taken from Creative Teaching in the Elementary School

STARTERS FOR CREATIVE WRITING¹ (continued)

*Describe abstract words through images, for example, "Joy is a chocolate ice cream cone in the hand of a three year old boy."

*Take a verb such as walk. Make a list of words that convey the idea of walk but are more exact (saunter, march, strut, stagger). Have the children act out the words.

*Guess stories from book covers.

*Write stories from books children like, for example, more experiences of Tom Sawyer as the child might imagine it.

*Create a story bureau. Pupils of intermediate grades write stories for pupils of primary grades. All stories are bound into a large book and made available to primary teachers. A story chosen by the teacher to be read to primary class may be read by the author.

Try these beginnings for compositions:

*If I could go to the moon, I...

*If I were an animal, I would be...

*Now you mustn't fool mother nature...

*A funny game is...

*In the land of ladybugs...

*Anger is...

*If I were ten feet tall, I

*One day my dog looked at me and spoke...

*I was on my way to a party when...

*A "Gribble" is...

*I never believed in reincarnation but...

*One day the sun never came out...

*One night when I was all alone...

*I never believed in magic until...

*If you can keep a secret, I'll tell you about...

*Remember when...

*If I had wings...

*I rubbed my magic ring and...

*I am a blood cell in the body of a great athlete...

*The hardest decision I ever had to make was...

Titles for starters:

*A School Without Tests

*When I'm President

*It Takes a Real Dummy for This Job

*Take a Deep Breath

*This Tape Will Self-Destruct in 60 Minutes

*The Year That Homework Died

*The World's Largest Friend

*My Special Miracle

*Tomorrow

*When My Bugaboo Grew

*My Square Bowling Ball

¹ Taken from Creative Teaching in the Elementary School

STARTERS FOR CREATIVE WRITING¹ (continued)

- *If We Had Fleas
- *Ugh!*-!
- *What is a Lonely Beach?
- *If Heels Could Talk
- *Smoke
- *A Tense Moment
- *The Upside-down Cake
- *The Sad Sack
- *The People Eaters

Some ideas that may get them going:

- *Tell how a caterpillar feels crawling over the palm of the hand.
- *Children tear black paper into many shapes or silhouettes and write what they suggest to them.
- *Describe a windy day.
- *Write "tall" tales about people or happenings.
- *Concoct new animals by joining two others - elecamel, kangarabbit - and make up a story with the new animal as a hero or villain.
- *Write conversations between the shoes of noted people.
- *After a discussion of secret fears, the children write about their greatest fear.
- *Pretend a huge skeleton in the museum comes alive and tells an adventure out of its past.
- *Write about the spills and thrills of sledding, skating and skiing.
- *Listen to a story about a child with one outstanding characteristic such as generosity or talkativeness, then write a story about why the child would or would not make a good neighbor.
- *Write about things around the house that mysteriously disappear: Where's my baseball bat? Who ate the extra piece of cake?
- *Make up the good advice a mother pet would give her baby before it goes out into the world.
- *Write a yarn for the Spinners Club. All members write a story and keep a notebook of stories.

ADVENTURES IN ALMANACKING²

Compile a class Almanac for 1981.

You don't have to be an Old Farmer to appreciate an Old Farmer's Almanac or to compile one of these useful compendiums. Your class has the resources and creative energies to turn out an almanac quite as captivating as anything Old MacDonald could come up with.

A good start for an almanac-writing project is to expose kids to a number of different kinds of almanacs. They're fairly inexpensive and can be found at most bookstores. The kids will soon have a good idea of the sorts of things almanacs include - just about anything. Topics easily touch on nearly everyone's special interest, and the format - everything from charts to poetry - provides fine variety in modes of expression.

¹ Taken from Creative Teaching in the Elementary School

² Taken from Learning magazine

ADVENTURES IN ALMANACKING¹ (continued)

Step two in almanacking might be a class brainstorming session to produce a suggested outline of content. Then implementation of various items may be worked out through small groups and individual projects. Here are some possible topics (subject matter groupings are only for convenience, not chapter headings):

Science:

- 1) home remedies ("For toothache, hold vanilla on tooth with tongue.")
- 2) herbs, plant lore, kitchen cosmetics
- 3) tide tables, phases of the moon
- 4) planting tables, weather predicting, science folklore ("When cows lie down, it's going to rain.")
- 5) identifying flowers, trees
- 6) windowsill gardens
- 7) ecology tips - saving energy, recycling, natural pest control

Language Arts:

- 1) poems, stories, local legends
- 2) proverbs and sayings
- 3) silly horoscopes
- 4) jokes, riddles, tongue twisters, jump rope rhymes, folk games

Math:

- 1) games, puzzles, brain teasers
- 2) tables of metric weights and measures

Social Studies:

- 1) famous birthdays
- 2) walking tours of town with maps
- 3) town history time line, interviews with townspeople on history of town
- 4) holiday customs around the world

Arts, Crafts, How-To:

- 1) kites, folk toys (willow and grass whistles, apple dolls, corn husk dolls, cat's cradles)
- 2) pomanders, quilts
- 3) quilling, origami
- 4) terrariums, bird feeders
- 5) tying knots, uses of knots
- 6) recipes for homemade "clay"

Information for almanac items can be drawn from reference books, resource persons and the children's own experiences. Written work can be channeled through student editors with teacher assistance. Making illustrations, choosing a title and designing a cover are finishing touches that generate considerable interest.

¹ Taken from Learning magazine, idea by MacGuire, Branford, Ct.

A NEWS STORY ABOUT ME,

Make this into a newspaper. Put into columns.

News About My Family

I have _____ brothers and sisters.
They are _____ years old.
I like to play with _____.
We play _____.
My father and I like to _____.
My mother and I like to _____.
I (like, do not like) to play _____.
I help at home by _____.
The thing I like to do best at home is _____.

News About My Friends

My best friend is _____.
I like him/her because _____.
We play _____.
I would rather play _____ at my
house, and _____ at my friend's
house because _____.

News About My Pets

I have a pet _____.
I (do, do not) take care of my pet _____.
I do not have a pet because _____.
I would like to have a pet because _____.

News About Things I Like and Dislike

I do not like these things: _____.
I do like these things: _____.

News About My Wishes

When I grow up, I want to be _____.
If I could have three wishes, I would wish:
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____

My Hobbies and Collections

I collect _____.
I want to collect _____.
My hobby is _____.

A NEWS STORY ABOUT ME, _____ (continued)

News About My Travels and Adventures

I have traveled by bus _____,
car _____, airplane _____,
train _____, bike _____.
I have visited these interesting
places: circus _____, zoo _____,
farm _____, dairy _____,
bakers _____, airport _____,
fire station _____, factory _____,
factory _____, and _____.
The best adventure I ever had was _____.

Movie, Radio, and Television Favorites

I see _____ movies each week.
My favorite movie stars are _____.

I listen to _____ television
programs each week.
My favorite television program is _____.

I listen to _____ radio programs each
week.
My favorite radio program is _____.

My Books and My Reading

I like to read about _____.
The best book I ever read was _____.

I (get, do not get) books from the
library.

I have _____ books of my own at home.
I read aloud to _____.
My favorite comic book is _____.

In the newspaper, I like these "funnies"
best: _____.

ME, MYSELF, AND I POEMS

Write poems that begin with the following phrases:

- *If I were... (president, God, a doctor, an astronaut, a designer, etc.)
- *I wish I were...
- *If I could be any age I'd be...because...
- *The best day of my life...
- *The worst day of my life...
- *The best (anything) there is...
- *The worst (anything) there is...
- *My secret place is...

YOU ARE A DESIGNER...

- *What can you design that uses 29 cardboard boxes of different sizes, shapes and colors?
- *Will you design a birthday card for your favorite T.V. character?
- *Will you design a super-duper, silly milk glass?
- *Can you design a wonderful, crazy ice cream cone?
- *Will you design a hat and 4 shoes for the elephant at the zoo?
- *Can you design a chair that does something different when you sit on it?
- *Can you design some earmuffs that do more than cover a person's ears?
- *What can you design using 74 acorns?
- *Design a new box to hold paints and brushes.
- *What can you design that uses ten old door knobs?
- *Can you think up a new vegetable? What color and shape is it? Draw the seed and the vegetable.
- *If someone gave you an empty, old bank building, what wonderful thing could you do with it? Tell all!!!
- *Can you design some interesting wallpaper for your bedroom?
- *Can you design one pet house to take care of my cat, my dog, my rabbit and my pigeon?

≡MOONLIGHT

- *Choose a song title (any kind). Then keep just the title and write your own lyrics.
- *Choose a nursery rhyme and rewrite it to keep the theme but minus the rhymes.
- *Pretend you are a camera. What are you taking a picture of? Write it down exactly and then arrange in poetry form.
- *Take an old proverb or saying and use it as your subject. Make a poem of your own.
- *Borrow a favorite line from some famous poem or piece of literature. Make it a poem of your own by beginning your poem with it.
- *Find an interesting slogan or ad campaign and use it to begin and end your poem.
- *Use math symbols to create new words or phrases.
Examples: cat + tree = pussycat
car + elephant = fat miles per hour
- *Set up a place where writers could go to discuss and critique their work with others.
- *List all the "soft" words you can. Now create a poem using these words. Do the same with "hard" words, "round" words, etc.
- *Associate colors with sounds. What color is a car horn?
- *Locate five unusual words in the dictionary that appeal to you. Note what each means and how each sounds. Now use all five in a nonsense poem.
- *Pretend you are very old. Write a poem about how it feels or write about what you won't be like when you're old.
- *Pretend you are a historical figure. Write how it feels.
- *Pretend you are about to go mad. What are your senses doing? Your thoughts? What would you write like or sound like?
- *Pretend you are someone you dislike and write how you, as that other person, feel about you.
- *Cast a spell or charm on someone in the form of a poem. What can break the spell? How long will it last?
- *Make up a product and write and illustrate an ad campaign for it.
- *Write a poem with a lie in every line.

*Write poems using the following starters:

"In the past they _____, but now we _____."
_____ is like _____.

Spring is _____.

Love is _____.

War is _____.

Fear is _____.

"I seem to be (a) _____, but I'm really (a) _____."
Write a poem with a color in every line.

*Write a poem describing how each thing in the universe goes to sleep.

*Make lists of interesting things to include in a poem.

Example: 10 things that could never happen

STARDUST

BOOK BINDERY

Have a long table labeled "Book Bindery" to hold all the materials necessary for binding student-authored books. Encouraging students to make full use of these materials will provide motivation for increased writing. Display the finished products.

WRITER'S CORNER

Have a desk set aside labeled "Editor's Desk." Students will react more positively to editing if it is done at this desk. Editors may be selected by popular vote to serve for a given term or each student could serve as the editor for someone else.

You will need a good dictionary, language rules book, pens for correcting, and paper for comments. Comment sheets are helpful and provide guidelines for the student editors.

Borrow an old typewriter and make it available to students to type their own creations.

ILLUSTRATIONS/ART

A "studio" could be set up in a corner of the room for students to illustrate their creative talents. A variety of supplies could be included: paper, poster board, paints, pencils (colored), ribbon, lace, yarns, and other goodies.

POET'S CORNER

The chairs (bean bag) and a small table can be set up to establish a poet's corner.

On the table could be placed:

- 1) a file box containing cards with suggested titles of poems
- 2) box containing lists of rhyming words
- 3) word sheets with first lines of haikus
- 4) pads and pencil
- 5) poetry anthologies
- 6) looseleaf notebook attractively covered to hold completed poems

OVERSIZED BOOK

Build an oversized book - at least as tall as the shortest child in the class, and big enough to stand upright on the floor. Make the cover of heavy cardboard from an appliance box, and decorate. Use heavy butcher paper or wrapping paper for the pages. Have children paste in original stories and illustrate them.

IMPRESSIONS

Write down as many impressions as you can - objects, people, places, events, names, etc., and be specific. You may want to do this for:

one day
one year
one place
one town
one neighborhood
one school

Develop these impressions into a poem.

GROUP IMPRESSIONS

Have each person write one line on a subject, giving one specific impression relating to it. Then collect them all and read as one poem.

BANNER POEMS

Make banners of poems by painting pieces of cloth or paper and hanging them in windows or entrances. Paint them so that the colors go with the mood of the poem.

POETRY SHEET

Get together and publish your own poetry sheet. Insert the weekly sheet into a collection for the room.

VOCABULARY CHART

Keep a vocabulary chart and enter all new words where children may see them.

Keep a dictionary and books about words easily accessible.

POETRY FILE

Keep a poetry file or drawer where poems and stories may be filed.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Keep bulletin boards changed!

STORYTELLING CLUB

Start a storytelling club to meet once a week.

IDEA SHEET

Keep an idea sheet in front of the room where anyone may put down an idea. Anyone else may use it for some writing if the spirit moves him/her.

CLASS YEARBOOK

Make a class yearbook fashioned after those designed for high school.

POETRY BOX

In an appropriate place keep a "Let's write a story or poem" box which contains pictures, materials, first lines of stories, haiku and cinquain, dittoed sheet blanks, and other things to serve as stimulators.

QUIET SPOT

Provide an isolated spot somewhere where one child can go at a time to meditate and write.

WORD CHARTS

Build word charts by taking a well-known word and making as many words from it as possible.

Example: rain

rain check
rain water
rainfall
rainy
raincast
raindrop

STRING ART

Have children make a string painting (made by dripping string in paint and laying it on and folding it on paper). Have them write what they see.

LETTERS TO CLASSMATES

Children can make their own cards, write letters or prepare surprises for a sick classmate who is absent. A chart is made of the number of days the student is apt to be sick. An envelope containing a number of the cards is mailed everyday, so the sick child receives a packet of cards every day away from school. These can be strong motivators for creative writing.

POST OFFICE

Teachers can capitalize on children's natural desire to pass notes to each other by constructing a mailbox from an old carton - especially one with separate sections. Children are then assigned a box, and are encouraged to write notes to each other and to the teacher and to mail them. The notes are distributed just before the students go home.

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY

- 1) Read some poetry or a piece of prose each day.
- 2) Breed an air of expectancy in your room - children write when they know you want them to.
- 3) Take the time to let them know when they have said something lovely and record it.
- 4) Use the changes in weather seen outside the windows to discover descriptive words.

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